

"The mighty dead
"Who blessed mankind and humanised the world."

THE CHRISTIAN FREEMAN

AND

Record of Unitarian Worthies

BEING A HISTORY OF THE UNITARIAN REFORMATION OF RELIGION IN EUROPE AND AMERICA
DURING THE LAST THREE HUNDRED AND FIFTY YEARS.

With some Account of the most Notable Works written by Unitarians.

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NEW YEAR CHIMES.

"Ring, happy bells, across the snow."

THE old familiar sounds, the sweet enlivening chimes, which flow in at the window with the opening year—they mingle with the voices of those who keep watch with prayer and praise.

The pious Wesley and his followers have made a new feast in the Christian calendar; the first and last hours of the year are consecrated with prayer, and are called "*Watch Night*" service. So natural is this celebration, it will, we think, be continued as long as the Church remains. The Roman Catholic priesthood have not disdained to adopt this help to holier life; and, by and by, this annual meeting may be christened "*ST. WESLEY'S VIGIL*." Those silvery waves of sweet harmony, from many a belfry, will never cease to crown this hour of piety.

Millions who own not the mission of Wesley, or the prayerful Wesleyans, have since felt the propriety of closing the old year with praise, and of crossing the threshold of the new with prayer. We all at last become the followers of the good of every sect and the wise of every age.

There are memories, too, associated with this season, both joyous and sad! yet all of them touching and calculated to sanctify human life. Yes, when the old year has fled, we find it has left behind some strongly marked experiences in every home, which never take wings and fly away. Some dear one who started on the journey with us has found a final resting place. Some plans of our life on which we had set our hearts have proved fruitless. It is true, we have had our spots of sunshine and our compensations. Hark! those merry bells seem to tell the whole tale of the year, and to blend in one the story of the past.

Sufficient for what is gone. Those sweet chimes have aroused, as well, other than plaintive feelings. We hear in them the trumpet call to duty, an enlivening voice which bids us march on from the good that is to the better yet to be. We glance forward, the way is open, the inspiring music has helped to make duty more plain. With strengthened heart and new courage we must rise and go forward. We have halted for a moment to survey the past and to provide Divine aid for the future. We have learned that persevering efforts vanquish every obstacle. What say those merry bells? "Take up thy staff and travel on. Encourage the weary. Speak peace to the troubled. Relieve the burdened. Visit the mourner. Inspirit the feeble. Do faithfully thy duty, again and again, and quit you like men."

A NEW YEAR

A new year,

A new, unsullied year is ours. Its page
Is sealed; we know not what is folded there;
We know not whether life or death is writ
Within the fearful scroll; but 'tis enough
To know the gift is God's. Within our breasts,
Amid love's blasted buds, joy's faded wreaths,
And hope's pale, withered garlands, one bright
flower
Is still uncrushed, undimmed,—the holy flower
Of Faith Divine. We feel, we know, that He
Who hath preserved us 'mid the thousand ills
The countless dangers lurking in our paths,
Still holds us in the hollow of His hand,
And bids us trust in Him.

Farewell, old year;
May we, when called like thee from earth away,
Obey, like thee, the summons, calm, serene,—
Without one sigh, or groan, or wild heart-throb
To mark the moment of dissolving life.
And O! may we within the Eden land,
Where angel wings are glancing through the air,
And seraph songs are poured from rainbow clouds,
Once more embrace the loved and lost, whom thou
Hast taken from us in thy silent flight.

REASON IN RELIGION.

BY HORACE GREELEY.*

My reason says, "This mortal state of being is but the vestibule of human existence. All that we see is but a minute fraction of all that is. God shows us enough to convince us that He loves purity, truth, worth, goodness, and hates vice, wrong, malevolence; but having explained Himself so far, He bids us trust Him for the rest—until it shall comport with His far-reaching purposes to make all plain." I trust and wait. The problem of evil tests, but does not shake, my faith. I look it steadily in the face, and though not unperplexed, am not cast down nor disconcerted. As Tennyson says,

"I sink upon the altar stairs
That slope through darkness up to God."

Nor does my reason revolt at what are popularly termed miracles, or special interpositions of the divine hand. I hear those who say, "An All-Wise God would never need to interfere with the operation of His laws," but I do not agree with them. I know no law more pervading and beneficent—I might add, essential—than that of gravitation; I am sure it is a perfect law; and yet, were I to see a child falling out of a seventh-story window looking upon a stone pavement, I should wish to arrest, in this particular case, the operation of that law; and I should not hesitate to ask God to interpose His invincible arm. I should not dream that I impeached either His wisdom or His law in so doing.

My reason gives a decided preference, among all the religions whereof I have any knowledge, to that commonly termed Christian, as I find it developed and defined in the Bible. I do not believe every portion of that book to be a revelation from God, since much of it plainly tells me that it is not so, but quite otherwise. There are passages in that book which I do not comprehend; there are acts and sayings recorded therein which seem to have at least the tacit approval of the narrators or recorders, which I cannot reconcile with the dictates of morality and justice; and I find no warrant therein for the pretence that God inspired the authors of the Hebrew chronicles, of the legends of Ruth, Esther, &c., nor even the recording Evangelists. As I read their narratives, those Evangelists were honest, worthy, devout men, who were chosen by Jesus to be witnesses to all future ages of the mighty works done, the wondrously wise

and tender sayings uttered by him, and who fulfilled their task with unequal ability and success, but with perfect integrity and fidelity. They may have misconceived some things, but they never intentionally misrepresented any thing. And their accounts, taken together, of the acts and words of Jesus, the leading incidents of his life, and the circumstances of his death, form by far the most interesting, important biography ever vouchsafed to mankind.

While my reason thus accepts Jesus of Nazareth as "a teacher sent from God," to save mankind, not from punishment, but from sin; and while I fully believe that "He shall see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied," through the ultimate ingathering of all human souls into his kingdom of love and life, I am not wise enough, even in my own conceit, to assume to say where and when the deliverance of our race from evil and suffering shall be consummated. Perceiving that they may leave this stage of being depraved and impenitent, I cannot believe that they will be transformed into angels of purity by the intervention of a circumstance so purely physical and involuntary as death. Holding that the government of God is everywhere and always perfect, I infer that, alike in all worlds men will be chastised whenever they shall need to be, nor can any escape the penalty of his evil doing. Once conceive that an Omniscient Beneficence presides over and directs the entire course of human affairs, leading ever onward and upward to universal purity and bliss, and all evil becomes a mere curtain, or passing cloud, which hides for a moment the light of the celestial and eternal day.

I am not disposed to regard all other religions than the Christian as diabolic, or even decidedly pernicious. On the contrary, I believe that their authors were generally wise and good men, who sought to make their disciples purer and better. I am not sure that they were left entirely without divine enlightenment and guidance; and I judge that it were better to be a Buddhist than worshipper of some loathsome serpent or senseless stone; and better to be a Mohammedan than a Buddhist. But, as Moses ranks far above Sakya-Mouni, or the author of Brahmanism, as a moralist and law-giver, so Jesus of Nazareth commends himself to my judgment as the wisest, purest, noblest, and greatest being ever born of woman, and my reason confirms the dictate of my heart, which hails him Son of God and Saviour of mankind.

* In the next number of the "RECORD" will appear a biographical sketch of Horace Greeley.

A NEW LEAF.

"For out of old fields, as men saith,
Cometh all this new corn from year to year;
And out of old books, in good faith,
Cometh all this new science that men here!"
—Chaucer.

A LITTLE child once asked, "What comes of the days when we have done with them?" When we have done with them, little one, we have never done with them. They form history.

The new leaf of to-day had its origin in days gone by. The present is the bud of the future, as the past was the bud of the present. We can never lay aside the past. We can never absolutely "ring out the old," however delightful it may be to "ring in the new." The old stands to our life as the trunk of a tree that bears the new boughs and the fresh leaves of many seasons. We must entwine the past with the present, and make what now is worthy of imitation and reverence in days which are yet to come.

It is possible, we know, to rely too much on the past. This passion for antiquity may be indulged with so great a servility, that we may have as little freshness in life as there appears in the moss which barely covers the old castle walls. We may blend the old with the new as the tree doth that is planted by the rivers of water, bearing both fruit and flower, striking a deeper root, and producing a healthier blossom every season.

We hail the New Year. We call it a new leaf. It is the season of hope and promise. It is a season which has a refashioning influence on life. It forms an epoch at which some different and some better effort is made. We embrace this new year to introduce a new series of papers, in which we may narrate the lives and noble deeds of those who have lived before us of our own household of faith. Many of them are well-known to fame. Their names are household words wherever our language is spoken. Some of them have shed a less brilliant light, yet have left a memory for quiet goodness we do well to ponder. No leaf is more precious than that which embalms the name and sets forth anew the lives of the enlightened, earnest, busy, noble, and enduring spirits whom we call our "WORTHIES." Thus we learn how it was, and in the midst of many difficulties, they shaped their useful lives. Not a few of the readers of those pages, we hope, may be led to a similar nobleness of patience and enterprise.

A NEW YEAR OF THE CHRISTIAN ERA.

BY REV. CHARLES T. BROOKS.

Not in the gush of spring
When every living thing
Hails the green dawn that flushes o'er the earth;
Not in the tender hour
Of bird and bud and flower,
Men greet a new-born year with joy and mirth;—

But when the frozen ground
Rings with a cheerless sound,
When groves are dumb, and waters ice-bound lie,
In a cold wintry light,
Robed in a snowy white,
The infant year opens his broad, bright eye.

Yet songs of welcome greet,
And children's voices sweet
Ring in his birth with their glad carolling;
The heart's warm fountains gush,
Cheeks, bright with rapture, flush,
And turn dead winter to a living Spring.

But is, then, nature dead?
That word shall be unsaid!
Lift up, O man! thy thoughtful soul on high,
Lo! from the fount of light,
Called forth by God's own might,
A Spring already blossoms in the sky!

There the New Year is born;
There breaks the blessed morn,
That pours upon the earth increasing light;
The Conqueror takes the field,
And Winter's doom is sealed,
God's Word hath issued with resistless might.

"The reign of God draws nigh!
The dayspring from on high
Hath come to guide and bless a darkened race;
The kingdom is at hand!
Prepare throughout the land
A highway for the King of truth and grace!"

So the glad tidings rang,
When seers enraptured sang,
Blessed by the Spirit with supernal light;
The day of Christ, unrolled,
Lay, a bright age of gold,
In lustrous noon before their piercing sight.

He came—the world to bless—
The Sun of Righteousness—
To usher in the Lord's accepted year;
Once more the listening air
Thrilled to the voice:—"Prepare
Your hearts and ways; the reign of Heaven is
near!"

"Where is that kingdom now?"
O doubter! askest thou?
Whose breath inspires, then, this life-giving air?
Whose look, with sunny ray,
Pours round thee Heaven's glad day?
And dost thou, thoughtless, thankless, still ask,
"Where?"

The reign of God is near;
Is not His kingdom here?
Is He not everywhere—the All in All!
Then deem not heaven afar,
Where sparkle sun and star—
His heaven embosoms this, our earthly ball.

The reign of God is near!
O heart! let this New Year
Be the accepted year of God to thee!
Be patient and content,
Childlike—obedient—
Be pure in heart and so His kingdom see!

WAYSIDE GATHERINGS.

THINGS NOT EASILY FORGOT.—“I forget a great many things that happened last year,” said a little girl, the tears running down her rosy cheeks; “but I can’t forget the angry words I spoke to my dear mother who is now dead.”

ALL ARE ARTISTS.—We are all sculptors and painters, and our material is our own flesh and blood and bones. Any noble deed begins at once to refine a man’s features, any meanness or sensuality to imbrute them.—*Thoreau*.

REASONS FOR MARRYING.—Père Hyacinthe and his friends, in assigning reasons for his late marriage, come far short of Luther’s pithy way of doing it. Luther’s famous reasons for making Catharine von Bora his wife were “to please his father, tease the Pope, and to vex the devil.”

MODERATE CALVINISM.—One of the Wesleys thus described those theologians who maintain that the election of some does not imply the reprobation of others:—

He did not do the ruthless deed,
Some have more mildly raved;
God did not damn them, but decreed
They never should be saved.

THE TWO FISHERMEN.—Some time ago a well-known angler was fishing in a trouting stream in Scotland, on a Monday, when he was accosted by the minister, who asked him as to his success. The angler, after replying, said to the minister: “Dae ye no try the rod yersel’?” “Oh, no,” said the minister, with pious awe and eyes upturned, “I am a fisher of men.” “Oh, indeed,” replied Sandy, “but I doot ye’re nae great hand o’t, for I lookit into your creel (basket) yesterday, and it was unco empty.”

A HINT TO THE QUEEN.—Dr. Pusey and Archdeacon Denison and others, who are trying all arts to retain the damnable clauses of the Athanasian creed might be dealt with by the Queen as similar gentlemen some years ago were served by Frederick II, King of Prussia. He received a petition from a body of his clergymen, asking him to silence a brother clergyman who did not believe that the future punishment of the wicked would be endless. The King penned the following reply: “I have considered the above petition, and do hereby give my royal permission, to all my loyal subjects, to be damned to all eternity if they choose it; but I do positively forbid their quarrelling with their neighbours who are not willing to keep their company so long.”

WHAT IS FAITH?—Soame Jenyns, a celebrated orthodox writer, in his work on “Internal Evidences,” says, “In the New Testament, *faith* even when applied particularly to Christianity, means no more than a belief of this single proposition, that Christ was the Son of God, that is, in the language of those writings, the Messiah. This was all that Christ required to be believed by those who were willing to become his disciples; he who does not believe this is not a Christian; and he who does, believes the whole that is essential to his profession, and all that is properly comprehended under the name of faith. This unfortunate word *faith* has been so tortured and so misapplied to mean every absurdity which artifice could impose upon ignorance, that it has lost all pretensions to the title of virtue; but if brought back to the simplicity of its original signification, it well deserves that name.” And again, “Our reason informs us that the punishment of the innocent instead of the guilty is diametrically opposite to justice, rectitude, and all pretensions to utility.”

A SCOTCH REBUKE.—Sir Humphry Davy and Prof. Playfair, in their geological ardour, were one Sunday breaking stones in the rocks under Arthur’s Seat, when a plain Scotch peasant came up to them and warned them off, saying, “Ye think ye are only stone-breakers, but I ken ye are Sabbath-breakers, and ye deserve to be stoned with your ain stones.”

FIRMNESS AND COURAGE.—Horace Mann has said, with regard to workers for reform, that “we want no men who will change, like the vanes of our steeples, with the course of the popular wind but we want men, who like mountains, will change the course of the wind.” When once we have made up our minds to effort in any good cause, all halting and shifting about should cease, and the whole heart be given to the prosecuting of the work. Otherwise, we had far better avoid all pretensions of respect and concern for it.

ATHEIST CONFOUNDED.—Sir Isaac Newton had among his acquaintances a philosopher who was an atheist. It is well known that this illustrious man, who takes the first rank as a mathematician, natural philosopher, and astronomer, was at the same time a Christian. He had in his study a celestial globe, on which was an excellent representation of the constellations and the stars which compose them. His atheist friend, having come to visit him one day, was struck with the beauty of this globe. He approached it, examined it, and said to him, “Who made it?” “No one!” replied the celebrated philosopher. The atheist understood, and was silent.

MAX MÜLLER ON THE SHORT CATECHISM.—Max Müller says: “There is no religion—or if there is, I do now know it—which does not say, ‘Do good, avoid evil.’ There is none which does not contain what Rabbi Hillel called the quintessence of all religions, the simple warning, ‘Be good, my boy.’ ‘Be good, my boy,’ may seem a very short catechism; but let us add to it, ‘Be good, my boy, for God’s sake,’ and you have in it very nearly the whole ‘law and the prophets.’” An English writer, quoting this declaration, says: “The principal article of faith, however, of the English Church, is ‘Be good, my boy, or the devil will have you.’”

COULD HE WHISTLE IT.—The *John O’Groat Journal* says: “A clergyman resident in this country, while on his pastoral rounds a few days ago, met a tinker lad playing on the bagpipes. He listened with attention to the various airs played, and expressed his admiration of the excellent manner in which the music had been performed; but being apprehensive that the performer’s musical talent had been cultivated at the expense of knowledge of a more momentous character, he asked him if he knew, “What is man’s chief end?” The musician, after a pause, replied, “I dinna ken, I’m sure; but if ye’ll whistle ‘t, I’ll play ‘t!”

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